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COUNTRY Siam

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SUBJECT Rice Smuggling Deal Involving Chancellor of
Portuguese Consulate, Bangkok

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1. The Chancery of the Portuguese Consulate in Bangkok, Jose de Ramos, is fairly widely recognized among Siamese business circles in Bangkok as being engaged in rice smuggling and sundry other illegal commercial transactions.
2. In January 1949, Ramos approached an associate with the following proposition: Ramos claimed to have access to "a large stock of rice which was already sacked and godowned in Bangkok" and had "IEFC clearance". Because of having proper clearance and papers, Ramos asked for a "mark-up" of 200 baht (US\$10) per 100 kilogram sack.* With this mark-up, the total selling price of the rice (FOB, Bangkok) was 50,000,000 baht (US\$2,500,000). According to Ramos, this rice could easily be shipped from Bangkok, ostensibly for its IEFC allocation area, and then diverted to the Philippines or China, where it could be sold for the equivalent of about 70,000,000 baht (US\$3,500,000). Ramos stipulated, however, that whoever was found to finance the deal must present evidence of a 50,000,000 baht deposit in a Bangkok bank before Ramos would reveal the location of the rice, and must transfer 50,000,000 baht to Ramos before he would turn over the shipping documents.**
3. Because it was difficult to locate anyone with sufficient funds to finance such a deal, Ramos had apparently been unable to find a customer up to the last week in February 1949. Since, at the time the offer was made, only Great Britain and China had sufficient remaining IEFC allocations of Siamese rice to accommodate a shipment of this size, it would appear that there was connivance on the part of officials other than Ramos. This connivance was indicated in a rather elusive statement by Ramos that the necessary papers had been obtained through the "cooperation" of a consulate in Bangkok, and not the Portuguese Consulate.

25X1A6a * [REDACTED] Comment. The Bangkok market price of rice is approximately 175 baht per 100 kilograms.

25X1A6a * * [REDACTED] Comment. Source was quite convinced that the Ramos offer was bona fide.

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